

Alternative Sources

Tree nuts are a good source of protein and several important nutrients such as folate, pantothenic acid, magnesium, copper, phosphorus, and zinc. However, it is possible to have a diet just as nutritious and tree nut-free! There are many other foods that can provide the same nutrition as tree nuts. For example:

- Meat is an excellent source of pantothenic acid, phosphorus and zinc
- Eggs can provide phosphorus and zinc
- Whole grains are a great source of pantothenic acid and magnesium
- Milk can add phosphorus to a diet
- Legumes contribute folate, pantothenic acid, and magnesium to a diet
- Seafood is a source of copper and zinc
- There is a peanut and tree nut free spread, called soy nut butter, which can be a great alternative to peanut butters. There are also spreads made out of sunflower seeds.

What about coconut, nutmeg, and water chestnuts? And what about acorns and pine cones??

Coconut, nutmeg, and water chestnuts are actually not tree nuts at all, so there is no reason for an individual with a tree nut allergy to avoid them.

There is also no evidence indicating that individuals with a tree nut allergy can have an allergic reaction to an acorn or a pinecone. Therefore, people with tree nut allergies do not have to avoid contact with acorns or pinecones.



Prognosis and Monitoring

Tree nut allergies are usually lifelong. However, about 9% of children with tree nut allergies will eventually outgrow them. RAST testing can be done to determine your child's IgE levels to tree nuts. If the levels decline to a certain level, a food challenge may be done in a controlled medical setting to determine if your child has outgrown the food allergy.



FOOD ALLERGY PROGRAM

The Food Allergy Program at Children's National Medical Center provides comprehensive services in the evaluation and management of a wide variety of food allergies, including IgE-mediated food allergy, gastrointestinal food allergy, and eosinophilic gastrointestinal disorders.

Food Allergy Program
Children's National Medical Center
111 Michigan Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20010
Phone: 202-476-3016
Fax: 202-476-2280

RESOURCES

For more detailed information about food allergies, visit:

- The Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network (www.foodallergy.org)
- The Food Allergy Initiative (www.faiusa.org)

www.childrensnational.org

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about
ALL TREE NUT ALLERGIES



What are tree nut allergies?

Tree nut allergies are one of the most common food allergies. About 0.4% of children in the United States are allergic to at least one type of tree nut. Tree nut allergies usually develop in children between the ages of two and four. A tree nut is a nut that grows in trees. The tree nut family includes almonds, cashews, hazelnuts, Brazil nuts, hickory nuts, macadamias, pecans, pistachios, pine nuts, and walnuts. If your child is allergic to one type of tree nut, it is advised to have him/her avoid all other tree nuts. This is because it is relatively common for a person with one tree nut allergy to be allergic to other tree nuts as well. Also, a food containing one tree nut may have been cross-contaminated with other tree nuts in its processing. Tree nuts can cause serious allergic reactions. In fact, they are the second most common cause of fatal food allergic reactions, behind peanuts.

Are peanuts and tree nuts the same?

Peanuts are actually not nuts; they are part of the legume family. They grow in the ground, unlike tree nuts which grow in trees. So, peanuts and tree nuts are not the same, but they do share a lot in common, including the risk of causing severe reactions, even from small exposures. Also, peanuts and tree nuts are often processed together, and the kinds of foods that might contain tree nuts could also very well contain peanuts (like baked goods and ethnic cuisine). Finally, many children with a tree nut allergy are also allergic to peanuts, and vice versa.

My child eats peanut butter. Should he/she stop because of a tree nut allergy?

If your child is allergic to tree nuts, but has been eating peanuts without a problem, it may be safe to continue eating some peanut products. Always read labels to be sure tree nuts are not in there, but of course know that there will always be the risk of cross-contamination. If you decide to keep peanuts in his/her diet, it would be the safest to stick with major brand peanut butters and candies which are less likely to contain tree nuts as a "secret" ingredient.



Management of a Tree Nut Allergy

How to prevent the possibility of a reaction?

The only way to prevent a tree nut allergic reaction is to avoid tree nuts.

Sources of Tree Nuts

- Tree nut is one of the allergens that must be clearly listed if it is found in a food product. It is important to read the label everytime you buy a food for your child with tree nut allergies as ingredients can change unexpectedly. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to call the manufacturer.
- In addition to avoiding foods that are labeled as containing tree nuts, your child should also avoid foods with precautionary labels for tree nuts, such as:
 - May contain nuts
 - Produced on shared equipment with nuts and peanuts
 - Produced in a facility that also processes nuts.
- Tree nuts can be found in a variety of foods. It is important to be aware of unexpected sources of tree nuts such as:

Chocolates

Many chocolates contain tree nuts. It is important to always read the food label on the package and steer clear if the label states "contains tree nuts" or if it has one of the precautionary labels above. It is also an option to buy from one of the guaranteed nut-free chocolate manufacturers.

Cookies, cakes, and other baked goods

Even if the cookies or brownies do not appear to contain nuts, tree nuts can often be used as a "secret ingredient." Also, cakes might be decorated with almond paste or marzipan. And be aware of possible cross-contamination – that spatula used to dish out the walnut-covered brownies could transfer enough walnut to your "safe" dessert to trigger a reaction.

Ice Cream

It is better to only purchase ice cream made by large manufacturers, and it is very important to always check the labels to make sure it does not contain tree nuts. It is recommended to avoid ice cream from ice cream parlors because there is a high risk for cross contamination from the ice cream scoops as well as the toppings.

Nut flavored coffees

Nut flavored coffees are common and contain allergenic proteins. It is best for them to be avoided.

Certain liqueurs

Nut flavored liqueurs are made by infusing certain nuts and then distilling the mixture. The names of some of these liqueurs include amaretto, frangelico, nocino, pistachia, and praline. These liqueurs are often used in different desserts and candies.

Meat substitutes

Many vegetarian food products contain tree nuts.

Barbecue Sauce

Tree nuts can be found in BBQ sauces as they are sometimes added to give the sauce extra flavor.

Tree Nut Oils

Tree nut oils should be avoided because they typically contain nut proteins.

Nut butters

The same equipment can be used to process different types of spreads. It is important to call the manufacturer to find out what other products are processed on the same equipment.

Ethnic cuisines

Chinese, African, Thai, Vietnamese and Indian dishes often contain tree nuts. In general it is best to avoid these meals as well as the restaurants carrying them because there is a high risk for cross-contamination.

Shampoos, conditioners, styling products, lotions, sunscreens

It is important to check the labels because these products can contain tree nut extracts, such as almond extract or shea butter.

